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MEDIA RELEASE

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS NEARING COMPLETION OF MAJOR RAIL CORRIDOR STUDY

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Preliminary Findings Indicate Significant Rail Improvements Still Needed To Handle Future Passenger and Freight Demands

Without significant rail capacity improvements, increasing passenger and freight train traffic will soon produce serious delay or even gridlock throughout eastern Los Angeles County and the Inland Empire. That assessment was made as part of the preliminary findings of a study being conducted by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) on the mainline railroad network in Southern California.

Through a series of advanced computer simulations, the Los Angeles-Inland Empire Railroad Mainline Advanced Planning Study is evaluating how well Southern California's rail network will handle the projected increase in container shipments generated by the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

A major step to improve the rail network has already been taken with the construction of the Alameda Corridor, a 20-mile, fully grade separated freight rail line linking the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to the transcontinental rail yards in downtown Los Angeles. The Alameda Corridor, the nation's largest rail infrastructure project, originally conceptualized by SCAG in the 1980's, will begin operation in April of this year.

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The SCAG study picks up where the Alameda Corridor ends, examining the future capacity demands on the three mainline railroads from downtown Los Angeles to the Inland Empire. In 2000, the two ports handled 9.5 million Twenty-Foot Equivalent Units (TEUs) of cargo; by 2020, the Ports are forecasted to handle up to 36 million TEUs, a 280% increase. Approximately half of this forecast cargo volume is expected to travel in and out of the region by rail. The study's preliminary findings estimate that train trips between Los Angeles and the Colton Crossing in San Bernardino County will increase dramatically to an average of 265 trips each day in 2010 (100 passenger trains and 165 freight trains) and 390 trips in 2025 (140 passenger and 250 cargo trains, respectively).

Simulations of rail network performance indicate that through 2025, the region's mainline railroads will require from two to four tracks on various segments of the network to accommodate projected freight movements. The simulations conducted in this study clearly demonstrate the need for greater system capacities. Absent recommended improvements and without an increase in the total number of Metrolink and Amtrak trains, the study shows that train delays on the mainline routes could increase from a current average of 30 minutes to an average of 190 minutes within the next ten years.

With the development of increased capacity, the region's rail network would be able to accommodate both the forecasted increase in freight movements and the passenger train increases planned by Metrolink and Amtrak with no increase in the current system's average delay.

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Remaining aspects of the study are developing infrastructure cost estimates and evaluating various funding and financing alternatives for the implementation of rail network improvements. SCAG is expected to complete and release the full study in May.

The study is just one part of SCAG's goods movement program. In addition to the study, SCAG is seeking to optimize the region's transportation system through increases in economic efficiency, congestion mitigation, safety and air quality improvements, and enhancements to system security. In doing so, all modes of freight movement are being evaluated, ultimately resulting in a series of new recommendations and policies regarding infrastructure improvements.

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